

399THERE WAS INDEED A CHINATOWN IN NEWARK

AND

WE WILL EXPLORE THE AREA ON A TOUR (OCTOBER 18TH) CONDUCTED BY CLARENCE H. SENIORS WHO LIVED IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

In downtown Newark, there was an ethnic Chinese community with a large percentage of Chinese immigrants. It was centered along Market Street in Newark, New Jersey from 1875 and remaining on some scale for nearly one hundred years. The center of the Chinese neighborhood was in the area very close to where the Prudential Arena is located and directly next to City Hall, the Post Office and the Government Center complex. The first Chinese businesses appeared in Newark in the second half of the 19th century and in the early part of the 20th century. By the 1920s, the small area had a fairly large Chinese population

We will walk through the streets where in 1910 a small lane with housing and shopping was built called **Mulberry Arcade**, connecting Mulberry Street and Columbia Street between Lafayette and Green Streets. In the 1920s, recurring federal opium raids disrupted the community, causing many to move to more peaceful places. There was an effort to revive the neighborhood decades later but the Mulberry Arcade (the center of Chinatown) was removed in the 1950s. Today due to the construction of the large Prudential Arena, there is barely any sign that Chinatown existed. And there is only a small Chinese population in the surrounding area. There is a single Chinese restaurant on Lafayette Street and next door there is an old building which was occupied by a Chinese business. Nearby is the **Sumei Multidisciplinary Arts Center**, which recently moved from an old factory in the Chinatown neighborhood. Sumei exhibits arts from various world cultures. We will visit the center nearby which houses the NEWARK CHINATOWN

COLLECTION OF YOLAND SKEET, the creator of the arts center. We will also visit the Newark Museum to see the Ming Exhibition and the Newark section of the Newark Library.

A Historical Account based on a lecture by Yoland Skeet

In 1870, James Hervey brought 68 Chinese to Belleville, NJ to work in his steam laundry along the banks of the Passaic River. They were treated with **hostility** by the local residents. A protest rally against their presence was held on the banks of the Passaic and reported in the newspapers of the day.

A wall was built around the steam laundry grounds to keep the public from hostile behavior towards the Chinese. Between 1875 and 1885, many Chinese left the laundry at Belleville to establish what became known as the Newark Chinatown.

By 1922, there were **3,000 Chinese** living in Newark Chinatown, located behind Newark City Hall. Newark Chinatown was a thriving center of Chinese culture in New Jersey.

How is it possible that an entire community of people could be eradicated from the face of a city?

No books on the history of Newark have given any consideration to the history of the Chinese

They made up a large part of the ethnic groups that lived there from 1870's to the 1960's.

Newark historians even in their writings today seem to have forgotten this major historical event.

The city of Newark today does not acknowledge the existence of a Newark Chinatown or that a **Chinese community** ever existed in Newark.

